

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In a shift mechanism for an outboard motor mounted on a stern of a boat and having an internal combustion engine and a propeller connected by a propeller shaft to the engine to propel the boat, a vertical shaft connected to the engine and transmitting an output of the engine to the propeller shaft is divided into two shaft halves and an electromagnetic clutch is provided to connect/disconnect the shaft halves. An electronic controller is provided to operate the electromagnetic clutch to disconnect the vertical shaft halves until one of the forward and reverse gears corresponding to the instruction to shift has been engaged with the propeller shaft, and then operate it to connect the shaft halves after the one of the forward gear and the reverse gear has been engaged with the propeller shaft. Alternatively, two electromagnetic clutches are provided to engage the forward or reverse gear with the propeller shaft, and the controller controls operation of the electromagnetic clutches in response to the instruction to shift such that corresponding one of the forward and reverse gears is engaged with the propeller shaft. With this, it becomes possible to decrease an impact occurring at the beginning of shift, thereby enabling to prevent the outboard motor from vibrating, while enabling to improve the operation feeling and facilitate maintenance, and to avoid a problem regarding space utilization.